

SUSTAINING FORESTS AND COMMUNITIES COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

REPORT OF
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WORKSHOPS

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A RENDEZVOUS

In the early days of our country's history, fur traders, mountain men, Indians, and explorers would gather each fall in the Utah mountains for a rendezvous. They would set up camp in the foothills of the Wasatch or Henry Mountains to swap stories, share information, and get caught up on what was happening in the field. Eighty people from around the continent gathered in northern Utah at the autumnal equinox of 1994 for a latter-day rendezvous. They came to hear news from the field, tell stories around the campfire, and sharpen their skills in getting people around the country to work together.

People came from diverse backgrounds and regions. They came representing communities, forests, rivers, national parks, tribes, and other entities. They came with a message from their communities: Find a way to manage natural resources that will both provide for people's needs and ensure healthy ecosystems into the future.

The theme of this rendezvous, called "Collaborative Planning for Sustainable Forests and Communities," was how to work together with different agencies, different artificial

lines on maps, different jurisdictions, and different mandates; to promote truly sustainable ways of life for people and all living things. We looked at sustainable ecosystems and economies for communities from the rural, coastal areas of Virginia to the rain forests of Alaska. From the streets of San Francisco to the wide-open range of Wyoming.

From the parched sagebrush of southern Arizona to the lush green hills of Vermont.

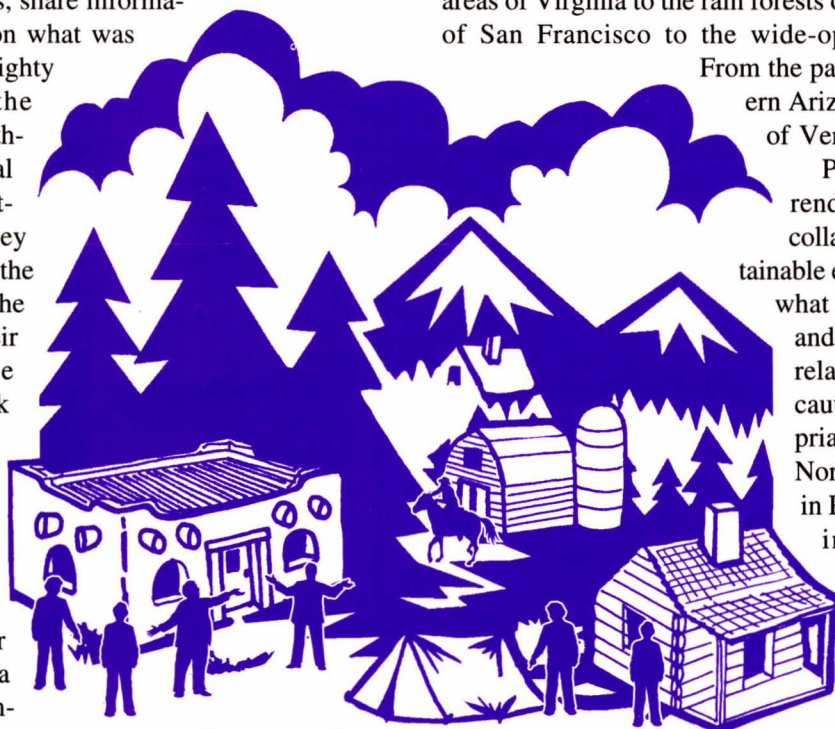
Participants came to this rendezvous with tales about collaborative planning and sustainable ecosystems. They explored what makes this process work, and how it takes time to build relationships and trust. They cautioned that what is appropriate for an Indian tribe in North Carolina may not play in Pocatella or bowl 'em over in Boise, but they did identify some operating principles that can be applied everywhere.

Intermountain Region Forest Supervisor Dale Bosworth told

the group:

"In managing natural resources, we have traditionally been very territorial. But now, we no longer need or want these Berlin walls between people and agencies

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**"When we see land as a community to which we belong,
we may begin to use it with love and respect."**

(Aldo Leopold)

COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

Sustainability-based planning contains a number of key elements. Here are some we identified:

Improve the situation. Whether the situation is amicable—or tense and full of conflict—it is good to start small and aim for improvement. “It’s not wise to set yourself up to solve everything, or have the perfect solution, or reach full consensus,” says Greg Bourne, who negotiates agreements throughout the U.S. “It’s better to take small, confidence-building steps at first. Acknowledge that this may be just the opening of the dialogue, that you will have an ongoing effort to make things better, and these are just the first steps of the process.”

Break down barriers. We all have allegiances to different agencies and ideals, but central to the process of collaborative planning is the concept of “fuzzy boundaries.” A watershed that is important to everyone might be in the administrative grip of a handful of agencies and interests. The State Fish and Game Department might manage the wildlife; while the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management may own most of the land. Private landowners claim parcels adjacent to the forest. A corporation depends on wood products to keep its mill running. People in the nearby town depend on the area for clean water and recreation. To work for the good of the whole, everyone must come to the table. Our lines on a map may be secondary to protecting the sustainability of that special place.

There are other barriers as well. Collaborative planning seeks to dissolve the boundaries between jobs vs. environment; development vs. preservation; economics vs. ecology. Though we sometimes get trapped in that kind of thinking, there are often solutions that embrace all interests and needs and can satisfy both “sides” of an issue.

Take the time to build trust. Collaborative planning is based on trust and relationships. The keystones of the process are open sharing of information, invitations to all interested parties to participate, and the identification of shared needs. Although trust takes time to develop, it can be quickly lost if not carefully nurtured.

Develop a common vision. When groups come together to talk about natural resource issues, on the surface there is often conflict and division. But if you take time to dig down a little deeper, often there is a common ground of shared values and desires. People linked by a sense of place often want the same things, despite their differences: clean air and water, recreational opportunities, economic security. Finding these shared values encourages people to work for the common good.

Offer positive leadership. For agencies charged with managing our lands, the challenges and opportunities ahead are immense. We are working in a time of shrinking budgets, with reduced resources to get the job done. We’re working at a broader scope than ever, across institutional boundaries. Our challenge is to mobilize our partners and stakeholders and use collaborative planning for sustainability across the landscape. “It is not necessary for leaders to have all the answers. Quite the contrary; it is necessary for them to know they do NOT have all the answers....” (Sheilah Hardwick, Four Directions Foundation) “The results of effective leadership are dignity, self-reliance, and self-respect for the individuals and communities involved.”

Know your assets. Every place has its special qualities that make it “world class” in some way. This sense of place and pride in community is a powerful force for working together for sustainability. People’s relationship to their land offers a grounding influence and a base of knowledge that are priceless. Everyone at the conference honored their ecological home, and praised the abundance of beauty and natural resources to be discovered there. This “Ecology of Place” can be the uniting feature that sustains everyone in negotiating solutions.

In addition to a strong sense of place and respect for the land, a key asset is the energy and diversity of people. Seek out those who are willing to roll up their sleeves and work—innovators, creative thinkers, pioneers. People also have the needed skills to get things done, whether it is scientific knowledge, contacts in other places that can be useful, or access to information.

Another asset is making use of existing programs and keeping a good relationship with local governments. Planners and “doers” are getting savvy about how to secure grants, work with existing environmental laws, and use tax incentives to their advantage. Some folks leverage grant money from a half-dozen sources, then use the “big bang” they get to solve a handful of problems. Positive relationships with local officials can keep the community abreast of any new initiatives on the horizon, or opportunities for funding.



"It is our task in our time to hand down undiminished to those who come after us...the natural wealth and beauty which is ours."

(John F. Kennedy)

A RENDEZVOUS

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and organizations. We will all get much better decisions about issues, and a better end product from diverse ideas and collaborative efforts. This is the future."

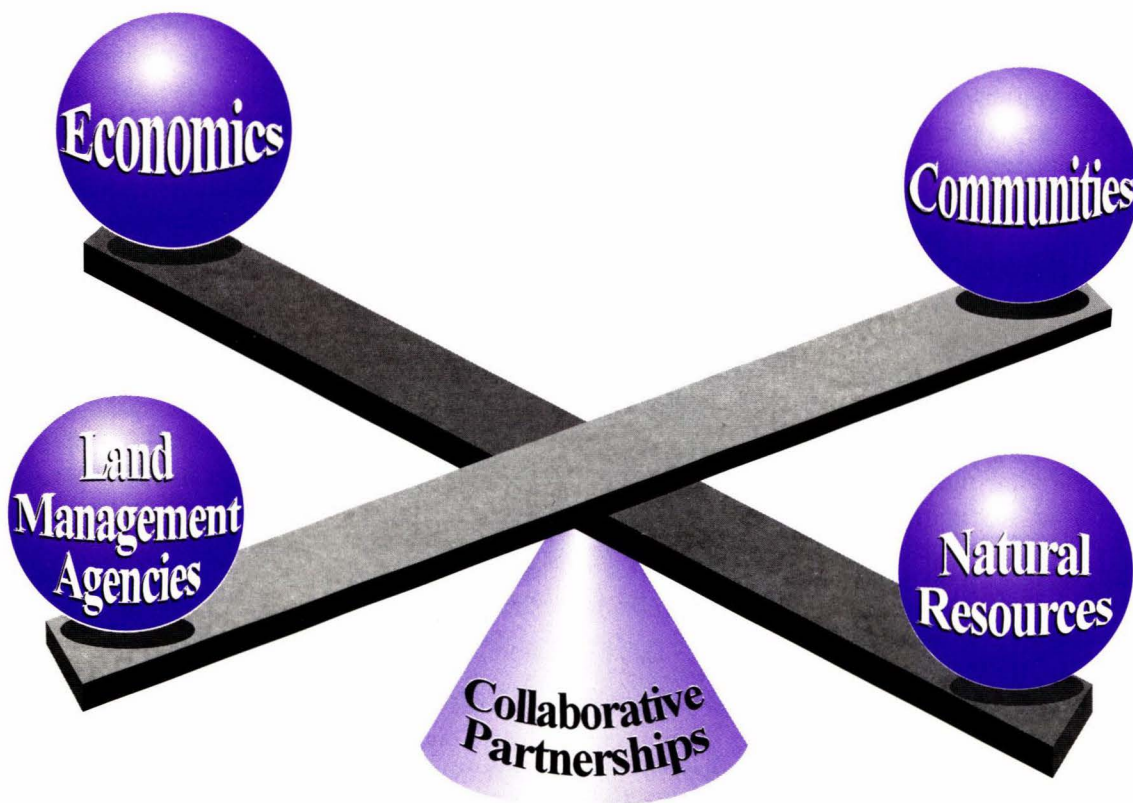
If collaborative planning is a river of ways to involve people in decisionmaking about their future, it has many tributaries. Mediation, consensus-building, negotiating skills, public involvement, communities of interest, grass-roots initiatives—all contribute elements to this planning approach. Our

working definition of collaborative planning was elegant in its simplicity: "Working together with community members to define shared visions that sustain both the community and the environment."

There are key components of this process that determine its outcome. Collaborative planning should link and connect diverse elements, such as peoples' needs and healthy ecosystems. Collaborative planning also needs to consider all sectors and functions of the human society—the mill worker, the farmer, the shopkeeper. To stand the test

of time and be truly sustainable, this process establishes the moral obligation to pass on a healthy ecosystem and human society to the next generation. Forest Service Chief Jack Ward Thomas has said we need to include in our thinking those who will come after us—the people not yet born.

Those who came to the Intermountain West and gathered near the shores of the Great Salt Lake for this rendezvous decided that for people who care about their communities and their environment, collaborative planning is everyone's job.



FINDING THE PROPER BALANCE



"We need to see that adversarial, winner-take-all, showdown political decisionmaking is a way we defeat ourselves. Our future starts when we begin honoring the dreams of our enemies while staying true to our own."

(William Kittredge)

SUSTAINABILITY

For the best outcome, collaborative planning produces solutions that consider the long-term health of both natural systems and human communities. Certainly things will change, and ideas will have to be modified to reflect new

conditions in the environment. But the concept of planning for sustainable ecosystems and communities seemed central. Here are some of the components and themes of sustainability:

■ **Maintain and enhance the quality of life.** This includes lifestyles of freedom and responsibility. It means maintaining the "specialness" of the community, and what makes it unique. It might be the ability to go horseback riding after dinner, canoe a lake close to home on a Saturday morning, or eat fresh clams from the bay. However we define these unmeasurable but vital qualities that make our lives meaningful, they play an important part in our thinking about sustainability. This means preserving a community's historical, cultural, and natural characteristics.

■ **Balance human needs and natural resources.** Give equal consideration to the human community's economic needs and the importance of preserving functioning ecosystems over time. Recognize that the sustainability of any community is linked to the sustainability of the area's natural resources.

■ **Encourage resiliency and flexibility.** The resiliency of a system is how well it can remain healthy and productive in the face of disturbances (both positive and negative, expected and unexpected). Resiliency includes both natural systems and social compo-

nents like economic diversity.

■ **Explore the relationship of sustainability and change.** Sustainability means maintaining the health and productivity of ecosystems, which provide a variety of benefits over time. But change is a natural part of all life—both in biophysical processes and in the human community. We must all wrestle with the question: How much variability and change in these systems do we want, or are we willing to tolerate?

"A man's value to the community primarily depends on how far his feelings, thoughts, and actions are directed towards promoting the good of his fellows."

(Albert Einstein)

■ **Look at the long term.** Sustainability looks beyond an immediate, now-oriented view towards the future, which could be decades or even

centuries away. Thinking about the long-term effects of our actions is a key component of sustainability.

■ **Work at multiple scales.** "Think globally; act locally" is an example of thinking in two different scales. Multiple human scales include the individual, community, county, State, national, and global levels. In natural systems, watersheds and ecosystems exist at varying scales—from small aquatic organisms in a single creek, to a large river system like the Columbia or Missouri.

■ **Respect knowledge.** Knowledge and information are vital to ensuring vigorous ecosystems. Past knowledge and wisdom from Native Americans, local knowledge at the community scale, and the best, broadminded scientific inquiry are all needed for long-term sustainability.

■ **Recognize and face limitations.** Natural systems have limits. A tree can only grow so fast; a river can only carry so much water. Human limitations include the familiar constraints of time, energy, and money. Recognizing and acknowledging these limits can prevent disappointments and encourage realistic expectations.



"Sustainability is simply the long-term protection of our assets."

(Tim Hayes, Director of Sustainability, Northampton Co., Virginia)

CAMPFIRE STORIES

At the gathering, we shared true tales about people making a difference all across the wide North American continent.



NORTHAMPTON CO., Virginia—Tim Hayes is "Director of Sustainable Development" for this rural Virginia county surrounded by the

Chesapeake Bay. Shellfish, seafood, oysters, clean beaches: These were assets this community had. But it also had 30 percent of its people below the poverty level, 12 percent of its homes without indoor plumbing, and the lowest per capita income in the State.

Hayes helped secure funding from a variety of governmental sources, emphasized sustainable development with tangible results, and pulled together a group of local citizens committed to collaborative planning. They started with a vision of what the county could be, by linking and connecting elements that could have been fragmented: people and resources; public and private; have's and have-nots; development and protection. Hayes forged an alliance that encourages restoration of the county's declining natural resource industries. Environmental laws, formerly perceived as roadblocks to development, were reframed as possible keys to ecosystem productivity. Hayes calls the new initiative "long-term

protection of our assets." A recent birding weekend brought hundreds of visitors and over \$50,000 to the county, a successful union of environmental protection and economic development.

Contact: Tim Hayes, Eastville, VA (804) 678-0477.

CORTEZ, Colorado—In southwestern Colorado, Mike Preston has knit together a consortium of interests that includes colleges, counties, tribes, and private interests—all of whom care deeply about the wide open range where they live.

He stressed getting together in the field, getting to know the key people involved, and taking time to build relationships and develop trust. "Get outside to the area you're looking at," he advised. "Local people know the places they like to hike, camp, picnic, watch birds, cut wood. When you want to understand people and build a relationship, don't use a 6-inch document. Get outside!" He noted that collaborative planning is a call to "civic virtue"—encouraging people to think and plan for the common good. He also stressed looking for opportunities to combine grants to produce "hybrid" plans that meet multiple needs or mandates (e.g., transportation, economic



development).

Contact: Mike Preston, Cortez, CO (303) 565-8317.

RIO ARRIBA CO., New Mexico—Luis Torres grew up in rural northern New Mexico, next to the Carson National Forest. Luis, his parents, and his seven brothers gained their livelihood from the adjacent forest, which provided wood to heat their home, game for their kitchen table, and a small stipend for Luis's father as a "per diem guard" in the forest, clearing trails and fighting fires. As a young boy, Luis says, "My idol was the Forest Ranger. He had a big, shiny new pick-up, with a horse trailer."



But Luis is now a man, and he offered a critical appraisal of some recent policies. The District Ranger and the Forest Supervisor in his region were transferred, severing what had been a long and trusting relationship. New officials changed long-standing policies and tinkered with a system of sustained yield units that had kept economic benefits "at home" for the locals. Luis started a program to provide students with opportunities to meet Federal agency employees such as hydrologists and archaeologists, to open rural students' eyes to new possibilities. The



"Local people know the places they like to hike, picnic, watch birds, cut firewood. When you want to understand people and build relationships, don't use a 6-inch document. Get outside!"

**(Mike Preston, Assoc. Director, Office of Community Services,
Fort Lewis College, Montezuma Co., Colorado)**

program was successful, but then it lost funding support.

He did offer some solutions, but noted, "I don't think there are any big, huge answers. The answers we need are more like baby steps. They are small, but they work." He urged Government personnel in any new "culture" to listen and learn. "Buy a house in the community. Join the PTA. Get involved with the kids. That's how you'll learn what the community really needs."

Contact: Luis Torres, Santa Cruz, NM
(305) 753-8407.

CADILLAC, Michigan—The Friends of the Forest in northern Michigan have been together for 5 years, and are still evolving and learning. This group was formed in 1989 as an open forum and feedback group for the Huron-Manistee National Forest. The Friends meet twice a year; meetings are open to the public, and are usually organized around a theme. Some past topics have included: ecosystem management, Kirtland's warbler management, black bears, timber issues, and oil and gas leases.

Don Krejcarek, planner for the forest, says an average meeting draws 70-80 people—and a hot issue usually brings out a crowd of 150. Many diverse interests are represented on Friends of the Forest, filling the spectrum from strong environmentalists to timber and other commodity interests.

Forest Service officials believe the hard work and time spent in developing these

relationships are paying off for everyone. "We feel this approach has led to better management decisions from the Forest Service, and has provided the Friends of the Forest with a better understanding of how the Forest Service arrives at decisions," says Krejcarek.

MContact: Don Krejcarek, Cadillac, MI — (616) 775-2421.

MALPAI RANCH, AZ-NM—How to hold on to old ways of life that are valued and valuable, yet are threatened by growth, subdivisions, and confusing Federal policies? These are the questions the Malpai Borderlands Group is answering as they fight to protect their lifestyle. Their mission: "To restore and maintain the natural processes that create and protect a healthy, unfragmented landscape to sup-

port a diverse, flourishing community of human, plant, and animal life in the Borderlands Region. Together, we will accomplish this by working to encourage profitable ranching and other traditional livelihoods, which will sustain the open-space nature of our land for generations to come."

The project includes two enormous counties along the Mexican border that are battling drought, shrinking profits, and a history of abuse of the range. In

addition to preserving their way of life, the group has saved a threatened frog species, reintroduced fire to the range, and started a grass bank to heal and enhance eco-

logical recovery processes.

Contact: Malpai Borderlands Group, Douglas, AZ — (602) 558-2470.



OUTCOMES

The twin outcomes of sustainability-based planning are:

Healthy ecosystems. We are careful and respectful in our approach to the natural ecosystems around us, for they are the foundation of our opportunities. Ecosystem health incorporates resiliency, diversity, and the cycles and processes of life. Present and future generations will benefit from healthy, productive ecosystems.

Vital communities. We strive to maintain places where individuals and families find comfort, security, and connectedness. This "sense of place" instills a pride in individuals, who recognize the unique character of the special area in which they live. Vital communities have social, economic, and environmental dimensions.



"There are no big, huge answers to our problems of sustainability in rural communities. The answers are small; they are like baby steps. But they are very, very important."

(Luis Torres, Community Development, Santa Cruz, New Mexico)

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

■ **Preplan.** Decide who the key players are in the situation or dispute. Discover all interested parties who might have a stake in the outcome, and invite them to the table. Have a clear sense of what the issues and problems are, and identify any potential conflicts. Assess the relationships between the parties involved. Have a clear set of goals and objectives for your process. Outline how you want to proceed, but remember, these processes are often metamorphic—they change and evolve over time as new issues emerge and new people become involved. Do your homework in advance—read a modern classic on negotiating, such as "Getting to Yes" by Roger Fisher and William Ury.

■ **Open the dialog.** Set early expectations low, especially if there is a history of "bad blood" between participants, or the issues are



especially volatile. Remember this is the first step in a long process.

■ **Set ground rules.** Some that work include: encouraging mutual respect, being good listeners, forbidding personal attacks, and separating brain-storming and evaluation of ideas.

■ **Map your goals.** If you can somehow visually portray where you want to go, everyone can see what is ahead. This builds trust, lowers suspicion, and promotes accountability. It also

provides focus on an objective result, rather than the people across the table. Meet often, if possible.

■ **Generate solutions.** Develop common goals and expectations for the process. Consider a neutral mediator or facilitator. Focus on interests (the underlying needs of the participants) rather than positions. Identify options. Use objective criteria to check for success. Hope for an underlying belief in, and commitment to, participatory democracy.

RURAL FACTS

There are more than 52,000 community and urban areas in the U.S. (U.S. Census, 1992)

Currently, 77 percent of U.S. counties have populations of less than 50,000 people—classified as nonmetro areas. (U.S. Census, 1992)

During the 1980's, 112 rural counties became urban counties due to population growth, while 17 urban counties became rural due to population declines.

Over 10,000 people are employed and \$128 million is generated annually from commercial trade in mosses, ferns, grasses, and other (nontimber) plants in the Pacific Northwest.

"An entirely new system of thought is needed: A system based on attention to people, and not primarily to goods..."
(E.F. Schumacher)

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**"This time, like all times,
is a very good one,
if we but know what
to do with it."
(Ralph Waldo Emerson)**

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Forest Service— Field Contacts

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Southwestern Region, R-3 (Arizona and New Mexico), Larry Roybal for New Mexico, (505) 988-6940, and Cal Joyner for Arizona, (602) 556-2076.

Intermountain Region, R-4 (Southern Idaho, Nevada, Utah, and western Wyoming), Wes Harvey, (801) 625-5259.

Pacific Southwest Region, R-5 (California, Hawaii, Guam, and Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands), Bruce Goines, (415) 705-2678.

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Northeastern Area S&PF (Same States as R-9), Lew McCreery, (304) 285-1536.

Alaska Region, R-10 (Alaska), Steve Bush, (907) 271-2577.

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